

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR



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October 25, 2004

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Dept. of Environmental Quality
Remediation Division

DEQ

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Michael Crill
1900 Maurice Ave.
Apt. #108-A
Missoula, MT 59801

Dear Mr. Crill:

Thank you for your letter on September 12, 2004, and your continued interest in the Libby Asbestos NPL Site. Your letter expressed multiple concerns regarding the clean up of the corridor between the former WR Grace mine and the town of Libby, and particularly focused on a 96-acre property downstream of WR Grace's former loading facility.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are currently planning a remedial investigation of asbestos contamination and potential risks for the Libby Asbestos NPL site, including the 96-acre property referenced in your letter. DEQ recently observed that the property in question is for sale.

The property appears to be of agricultural use with irrigated hay production and pasture. Due to the scope of the Libby asbestos contaminant issue in Libby and the surrounding areas, EPA has prioritized their efforts to address immediate concerns including areas that have the highest concentrations of asbestos, such as the former export plant and the screening plant. EPA has also addressed some recreational areas as very high priorities (e.g., the ball fields, where there were piles of vermiculite, and the track at the high school). Now EPA's focus is on residential properties that are within the study area's boundaries. Because the 96-acre property is principally for agricultural land use, EPA has not focused their immediate investigative or removal efforts at that property.

Property development and land use changes will alter activities and potential exposures to Libby's asbestos. Should current or future landowners develop this property into a land use category, with a potential for higher asbestos exposure, EPA may likely move this property higher on the priority list and work to protect residents and visiting recreationists from unacceptable exposures. There is no timetable for this land use change or for EPA's investigation plans at this time.

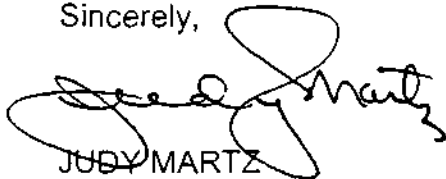
Mr. Crill
October 25, 2004
Page 2 of 2

EPA, in consultation with DEQ, has a monumental task of addressing asbestos issues in Libby and surrounding areas. The entire process takes time and money, which are limited. DEQ will continue to work with EPA to address current and potential risks to Libby's asbestos issues.

Some of the burden to become educated and make decisions based on the facts belongs to both realtors and potential buyers. EPA has many fact sheets and informational articles available for the public. DEQ and EPA are working with local governments and citizens, to prepare information specifically focused on real estate transactions and rental properties.

Thank you for bringing this issue to my attention.

Sincerely,



JUDY MARTZ
Governor

cc: Jan Sensibaugh, Director, DEQ
Sandi Olsen, Administrator, Remediation Division, DEQ